City of Lafayette Staff Report

For:	City Council
By:	Leah C. Greenblat, Transportation Planner LG
Date Written:	July 21, 2009
Meeting Date:	July 27, 2009
Subject:	Comments on the Contra Costa Transportation Authority's draft Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

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Introduction / Discussion

Members of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) and the Circulation Commission reviewed and provided comments on the June 1, 2009 draft of the Contra Costa Transportation Authority's (CCTA) draft Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Due to the length of the document, staff has not included it as an attachment to this staff report, however; copies of the draft plan are available at the City Offices or online at www.ccta.net. Staff has incorporated its comments and the comments from the Commission and members of the BPAC into a draft letter to the CCTA, attached.

The plan is an update to a previous plan that was adopted prior to the adoption of Lafayette's Bikeway Master Plan. The plan will be used to guide development of and prioritize pedestrian and bicycle projects for Measure J funding and other non-motorized funding sources that the CCTA will administer. The suggested additions to the Countywide Bikeways Network contained in the draft comment letter would make it consistent with the City's Bikeways Master Plan. Other comments on the text of the draft plan primarily relate to better positioning smaller jurisdictions, like Lafayette, to better compete for future CCTA funding.

Fiscal Impact

None.

Recommendation

1. Authorize the Mayor to sign a comment letter to the CCTA regarding the draft Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

Attachments

1. Draft comment letter to the CCTA

July 21, 2009

Brad Beck
Senior Transportation Planner
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
3478 Buskirk Drive, Suite 100
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

Dear Mr. Beck:

The City of Lafayette is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the June 1, 2009 draft Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Lafayette's Circulation Commission and members of Lafayette's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee were able to review it and provided input into the City's official comments contained in this letter. The City Council reviewed these comments and authorized their submittal at its July 27, 2009 meeting. Lafayette's comments consist of two parts: comments on the proposed Countywide Bikeways Network and comments on the plan's text.

The following tables contain the City of Lafayette's official comments on the June draft plan:

City of Lafayette's Comments on the Draft Countywide Bikeways Network:		
Road	**Limits**	**Comment**
Withers Avenue	Reliez Valley Rd. to Pleasant Hill Rd./Lucinda Lane	One of few east-west roadways connecting north-south streets on the network.
Stanley Blvd.,-Springbrook Rd.	Pleasant Hill Road to Camino Diablo	A relatively flat, low-volume route, on a traffic-calmed street that links Acalanes High School to Walnut Creek. (Portions of this route soon will be designated a bike boulevard.)

City of Lafayette's Comments on the Draft Countywide Bikeways Network:		
Road	**Limits**	**Comment**
Hidden Valley Road	Acalanes Road to St. Stephens Trail	Parallels SR 24 on the south side of the freeway. Relatively flat route.
Happy Valley Road	Mt. Diablo Blvd. to Bear Creek Road	Provides access to downtown Lafayette, Lafayette BART Station and elementary school. Popular route for recreational riders.
Upper Happy Valley Road	El Nido Ranch Road to Happy Valley Road	Provides access to private high school and elementary school. Provides a link between various network segments. Popular route for recreational riders.
Bear Creek Road	Orinda to Martinez	Popular bicycle route linking multiple jurisdictions. Provides access to regional parks.

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City of Lafayette's Comments on 2009 Countywide Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan, Pubic Review Draft, 6/1/2009			
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1.	Xii, 5th bullet,	*Prioritization criteria for funding*	We have several concerns with the prioritization criteria
	2, last bullet	Prioritization criteria for funding: "…for bicycle projects, this criterion would be limited to the priority bikeways."	It was Lafayette staff's understanding and we support that the CBPP advisory committee wanted jurisdictions to be able to propose any project for funding consideration and all of the criteria would then be applied. Yet there are references throughout the document suggesting that prioritization for funding would be limited to projects in the plan and on the bikeway network.
	Xii, 7th bullet	Latent demand criteria…"percentage of zero-vehicle households."	This latent demand criterion is problematic in that it places greater priority on projects located at the home (origin) of a trip, but not at a destination. If an equivalent criterion for destinations is not possible, this one should be deleted. For example, what about work places that have zero-vehicle employers and employees? Or commercial areas with zero-vehicle businesses? How would you give them the same consideration as zero-emission households?
	37, 3rd sentence	Funding Policy: "To prioritize its investments, the Authority has decided to give priority under its funding sources for capital bicycle and pedestrian projects to proposed projects located in 'pedestrian-priority' areas or along pedestrian-priority routes."	The CCTA's priority for investments appears to be a new policy that was not included in the Goals and Policies Chapter. This is a key funding policy that should standout more readily and be more clearly stated. If this is a funding policy, this is even more reason to clarify the nomenclature and definition of priority areas for funding. The current phrasing implies that access routes to transit, schools, through-routes and other activity centers are not considered priorities for funding. In the introductory paragraph on page 26-37, clarify the relationship and role of the three subheadings that follow.
	48, right column,	Prioritization based on inclusion on the Countywide Bicycle Network	If a project proponent can build a strong case for a project not on the CBN based on safety, expected demand, cost-effectiveness or newly recognized imperatives, the

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	2nd para 96, left column, 1st para.	(CBN) Priorities for funding: "To ensure that all types of projects are funded, the Authority should consider reserving a minimum percentage of available funds…for each project type…"	project should be able to compete equally with a project that's on the CBN for CCTA funding. If this is to be the policy of the Authority, it should be included in the Goals and Policies chapter. Additionally, since the EBRPD is set to receive one-third of the funding in the Measure J Pedestrian and Bicycle Fund category, the plan should clarify 1.) whether the EBRPD would be eligible to apply for the remaining 2/3 of those funds and 2.) provide guidance on how the 1/3 of the Measure J Ped-Bike funds that EBRPD is allocated to spend "equally in each subregion"
2.	36-39	Priority Areas & Pedestrian-oriented districts	Generally, this section of the plan needs further refinement. The difference between many of the phrases and categories mentioned is unclear, e.g. pedestrian priority areas, pedestrian-priority routes, pedestrian-oriented districts, pedestrian-priority locations. Perhaps consistent nomenclature or explaining how they relate to one another would clear this up.
3.	37, right column	Pedestrian-oriented districts: "Such areas exhibit a range of land use, urban form…that welcome and encourage walking….Generally, pedestrian-oriented districts have:.."	Not all existing or planned pedestrian-oriented district will have these characteristics. Revise to read, "Such areas *may* exhibit…" A jurisdiction may have plans to convert over time an area that may not be considered pedestrian-oriented today. Since the plan relates pedestrian-orientation with funding, planned pedestrian-orientation should also be included. Revise to read, "Generally, pedestrian-oriented districts have *or plan to have*:"
4.	37, last bullet	Pedestrian Districts have: "Few auto-oriented uses such as drive-throughs and car dealerships, and most parking provided in the form of on-street spaces and garages rather than surface lots"	This characteristic of a pedestrian district seems too urban-oriented for most communities within Contra Costa County. Surface-lots instead of structured-parking are often an issue of development costs and not necessarily a matter of walk-ability. Properly designed and located surface lots (e.g. placing parking in the rear of the site, providing designated walking areas) can be compatible with a pedestrian-oriented district.

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5.	39	Listed activity centers: "Employment, shopping or commercial centers considered large from a county perspective" "Major public venue, including….government offices with large numbers of visitors."	Reducing vehicle trips even in a small jurisdiction can have a significant impact on traffic, including regional traffic. Just because an activity center is large from a county perspective it should not automatically receive a higher priority for funding. "Major" should be considered within the context of the community. Furthermore, other factors such as safety should be an important consideration when prioritizing pedestrian projects. Revise bullet and strike: …~~considered large from a county perspective~~ Similarly, strike ~~Major~~ and ~~large numbers of visitors~~ in the third bullet.
6.	39	Planning For Pedestrians	Land use and development patterns are noted as important for improving walk-ability. Additional factors often cited by pedestrians is frequency of crossings and traffic signal timing. Related to pedestrian sensitivity to distances is also the sensitivity of the time needed to traverse that distance. Inconvenient signal timing can discourage walking or encourage jay-walking potentially impacting pedestrian safety. Pedestrian street crossing opportunities should be available approximately every 250 feet in order to create a walkable district. Additionally, when planning for pedestrian facilities, safety should be considered a high priority. If there is no existing pedestrian facility shouldn't that be an important factor when prioritizing projects for funding? A project to create a new pedestrian facility where there is none should be able to compete with a project to augment existing pedestrian facility (e.g. a sidewalk on both sides.).
7.	40, 1st para.	Pedestrians and traffic signals	In pedestrian oriented districts, consider whether there should be a policy such that signal timing priority should facilitate pedestrian movement over vehicles.
8.	42, 1st bullet	Sidewalks and Driveways	Further clarification should be included in the driveway discussion. A common existing condition in older, pedestrian-friendly developments with existing sidewalks is the occurrence of frequent driveways. Revise this section to clarify

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			that new development provides opportunities for the grouping of driveways, particularly on arterial streets.
9.	Chapter 6	Lafayette-Moraga Trail links to Oakland	The Lafayette-Moraga Trail does not continue past the community of Canyon. The trail that continues is a pedestrian only trail and a permit is required. There is no 24-hour, trail access between Canyon and Oakland. Pinehurst Road, the narrow roadway that does exist, should not be a recommended route for less experienced bicyclists.
10.	67, bullets 1-3 and thru-out	Three primary needs for accessing transit	Personal security and facility maintenance are key determinants in someone's decision to utilize transit. Perceived safety threats and lack of facility care discourage usage of transit. These two determinants should be added to the discussion.
11.	94	Local jurisdictions, item 5	Clarify that local jurisdictions would "incorporate policies that encourage higher densities, mixed-use development and site and architectural designs" as appropriate for their jurisdictions. For example, a school in an existing, lower density neighborhood should be treated differently than a downtown, and downtown Walnut Creek should be treated differently than downtown Moraga.
12.	98	Transportation for Livable Communities	In the second to last sentence, clarify that the projects to be funded in this category are to be selected by the local regional transportation planning committee.
13.	B-9	Pedestrian-priority areas	The Lafayette General Plan contains additional Goals and Policies related to the City's pedestrian priority areas that should be noted in the plan: General Plan Policy C-3.1 Place a higher priority on safety, encouraging a pedestrian-oriented design and scale; and on maintaining the quality of life and identity of residential neighborhoods than on accommodating through-traffic. General Plan Goal C-6 Provide an attractive, well-designed system of walkways

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			for safe and efficient pedestrian movement in Lafayette. The walkway system should connect residential areas with the local and regional trails system, public transportation, schools, parks and other community amenities, and the Downtown core Area. General Plan Policy C-9.1 Support improved access to public transportation and sidewalks for people with disabilities. General Plan Policy C-9.2 Design a pedestrian circulation system to meet the accessibility needs of all segments of the population. General Plan Policy P-3.2 Locate and design trail routes to the following criteria: a) Emphasis on scenic qualities b) Use and enjoyment by neighborhoods and City residents c) Connection with local and regional open space areas, parks, points of interest and community facilities.
14.	C-28	County Connection Service Levels	The variety in County Connection service levels impacts how pedestrians and bicyclists may use transit to expand their travel area. In the case of Lafayette, transit service is present but quite limited in service hours to significant portions of the community. Modify the first bullet to read, "All five jurisdictions *have at least limited bus service provided* ~~are served~~ by County Connection. Regarding the second bullet, not all park and ride lots are served by frequent enough County Connection service to serve the needs of commuters (e.g. St. Mary's Rd. Park and Ride Lot).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Countywide Bike. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Leah Greenblat, Transportation Planner, at 925.299.3229.

Thank you again for seeking our input.

Sincerely,

Don Tatzin
Mayor

cc: SWAT
SWAT TAC
Circulation Commission
Leah Greenblat

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